

Letters from our readers

31 January 2006

The following is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “Bush administration launches campaign of lies in defense of government spying”

Excellent piece. However I think it is important to note that the administration is now focusing its defense on the parsing of the Fourth Amendment—specifically, that its searches are “reasonable” and by implication that warrants are not necessary, thus eliminating the “probable cause” requirement. In its 42-page defense, the section on the 4th (pages 36-41) cites examples of reasonable searches such as those involving juveniles, which involve other issues as well. In other words, warrants and probable cause are not pertinent to what they are doing. There are numerous cases where the courts have upheld a warrantless search based on a reasonable assumption that a crime has been or is being committed.

You might want a lawyer to look at this to explain why this position is a stretch to what they are actually doing. There is a world of difference between tapping telephones, etc., and searching juvenile lockers or a policeman looking for marijuana at a traffic stop.

Both Gonzales and Gen. Hayden have been using this as the main line of defense, suggesting that they realize the other arguments citing commander-in-chief powers or the Authorization to Use Military Force are not arguments that are sustainable.

I do not believe they will cooperate in any investigation that would undermine their claim that the calls are related to Al Qaeda calling the US. They are locking themselves into a position such that any evidence to the contrary would undermine it, and would call the whole operation into question as illegal. It has already been established that they were spying on the UN and the Security Council delegations in the run-up to the Iraq war. What the media overlooks is that that spying was on US antiwar and pro-war activists.

Just as a matter of common sense, there is no need to bypass FISA unless the taps are clearly illegal. After all, the FISA court is a conservative national security minded rubber stamp. It did apparently find a relatively large number of Bush administration requests in need of revision. It would be interesting to see what those requests were and how they were revised, something that won't happen.

BR

Orange Park, Florida

25 January 2006

On “What Al Gore’s speech reveals about the state of US politics”

Thanks for yet another fine article. As has often happened, you (WSWS) are the only source that has confirmed my own opinion exactly, and with fine eloquence. I consistently find WSWS articles to be exactly what I would write if I could (and like to think I could if I made the effort—pardon my lack of humility!) I recommended Gore’s speech to my classes the other day, saying really almost verbatim what you said, so to read it on your web site at least confirms that there are others who think like me! I am not expressing this well, but I mean to

say that you are performing an extremely valuable and precious service. I wish it were not so and that more people thought this way, but the fact is simply that they do not, and/or cannot/do not say so.

MM

Niestetal, Germany

26 January 2006

Thanks. I couldn't agree more. I fear that it is not so much that the right has risen as that the left has fallen. Now that trade union membership has been whittled down to less than 8 percent, from its former standing of 33 percent of all US workers, the only voice which stands against barbarism is that of authors like you. Our only hope is to remember that this sorry situation is not unprecedented and that change can happen very quickly—just as unionism itself rose from nothingness in the 1930s to a third of all workers.

TM

27 January 2006

On “Two missing in fire at West Virginia coal mine”

When analyzing the coal mine deaths, one thing must always be realized. The governor of West Virginia can talk about reform, but the legislature in Charleston has always been controlled if not outright owned by the large coal companies. Maybe they are more subtle about it now, but not much has changed.

CH

Former resident of West Virginia

26 January 2006

Before we had fire suppression or carbon monoxide monitors, the coal company had people at the belt drive or transfers. The people keep the area clean. And in case there was a hot spot, they would be there to take care of it. Now, sometimes it is up to eight hours before a person is by an area. They need to make a law to have a person at these hot spots. When you say anything to an inspector, they can't fire you for that. But they can make rough on you. Your inspectors are lax in shutting down a section or a long wall, but they are still the best friend a coal miner has.

MD

Craigsville, West Virginia

25 January 2006

On “The Democrats and Alito’s Supreme Court confirmation”

The spines of the Democrats have only become floppier over the last several decades. It is abhorrent to me that I live in Nancy Pelosi’s district in San Francisco. Her opposition to calls for impeachment of Bush were booed deservedly. She’s fortunate that the crowd wasn't throwing rotten vegetables, as well. But Pelosi has long been what local “progressives” call the “Pod-Pelosi,” referring to the film “Invasion of the Body Snatchers” wherein mysterious aliens turned any human who fell asleep into one of themselves, maintaining the original person’s appearance.

As for another California Democrat, Senator Dianne Feinstein, failing to support a filibuster against Samuel Alito with the lame

comment that “[t]his might be a man I disagree with, but it doesn’t mean he shouldn’t be on the court,” and indicating that she would vote for a closure of debate on the appointment, I can only feel nausea and disgust.

There is no opposition party in this country, to the immeasurable detriment of its ordinary citizens, who are condemned to sit on the sidelines and watch our co-called “representatives” go through the motions of living up to their responsibilities while the country sinks into a morass of debt, unemployment, the dismantling of the educational system, homelessness, hopelessness, propaganda, unspeakable backwardness and religious mania.

It is long past time for the people to support a party with our interests in mind and not the continued enrichment of a very few whose insatiable appetite for power and wealth is destroying the country and threatening the world.

CZ

San Francisco, California

27 January 2006

On “Independent journalist who attacked Harold Pinter turns on World Socialist Web Site” and “Letters from our readers”

The passage, “now kiss my mouth,” from Pinter’s poem, has an additional connotation that has not been mentioned. That connotation is that of an eroticizing of domination and slaughter, and the corruption of sex into violence, which we see sometimes portrayed artistically in literature, or, concretely, time and again, in many conflicts, as rapes occur with massacres and other types of violent crime, like My Lai, etc. The sexual thrill of the sociopath is sometimes observed and even encouraged in the fighting man. Killing on the battlefield is equated with, and can become a substitute psychologically for genital gratification, when not directly associated with rape itself. A “kiss on the lips” is usually seen as an erotic, serious kiss, as opposed to one on the hand or cheek. The “kiss on the mouth” has the effect of sexualizing the poetic situation and the transition from the killing in the poem to some kind of accommodating, “normal” and obliging social world, political relation and outcome, which in this juxtaposition appears disgusting, given the prior violent description in the poem of the abnormal destruction of the human body by one of its own.

JB

26 January 2006

On “Seven-year-old girl murdered in Brooklyn—Child abuse tragedy shines spotlight on social crisis”

Thanks for this article that for once addresses the real criminals in the social welfare system. I am a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate for foster kids living in group homes. My function is to advocate for the youth in a group home in an effort to secure the help and assistance available to them before they are “emancipated” from the system at age 19 or upon graduation from high school, whichever occurs first. We do the work that is expected to be done by case workers and court appointed attorneys who are way overburdened and cannot possibly do what is necessary for these kids and, indeed, what they are entitled to under present California law. Consequently, 50 percent of these kids wind up homeless within one year of emancipation. That word (emancipation) itself is revolting to me in this context. You’re absolutely correct. Nothing can change until the system that fails to provide food, clothing, shelter, health care and education to all is brought down and replaced with a more humane one.

GC

Oakland, California

29 January 2006

On “Generals Motors lost \$8.6 billion in 2005”

I need all the help I can muster with my tax return. I wonder if it’s possible to be put in touch with the genius who conceived and carried out the creative accounting for GM?

WH

Australia

29 January 2006

On “Diabetes in the US: a social epidemic”

This was a very good article. I was struck by the national figures you cited, 21 million diabetic and 41 million more with hyperglycemia, most of them working class adults. The point that diabetes is a social epidemic is applicable for any number of health problems that are exploding in this country. And certainly these are interrelated as well. The number of overweight adults is around 127 million, and of those, more than half are obese, thus at risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes, and other life-threatening diseases. How many adults are there in the US? Somewhere around 200 million. It is just unacceptable to see serious disease rates in the tens of millions when the US is supposedly the richest and most successful country. Then again, tens of millions of us are uninsured (45 million), underinsured (16 million), and depending on the government for some assistance, which does not usually meet all (or in some states, any) of the medical needs of adults! Thank you for considering it worthy of analysis.

NG

30 January 2006

Thanks for an excellent and comprehensive article on this very serious public health problem.

One possible factor in the diabetes epidemic has been the substitution of high fructose corn syrup for cane sugar in most food products, including the cola drinks. I’ve seen studies which say that people can eat much larger quantities of this cheap synthetic sugar without their bodies responding by reducing appetite.

Again, thanks.

RVW

30 January 2006



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